

Yes, They Telephoned 1000 Years Ago

Recent Discoveries Reveal That Peru's Mysterious Lost Chimu, Who Shaved With "Tweezers" and Drank From Whistling Beer Mugs, Had a Crude but Workable Phone to Summon Servants or Make Dates With Their Lady Loves—Centuries Before Alexander Graham Bell

The Earliest Known Telephone Found in the Ruined Chimu Palace at Chan Chan, 300 Miles North of Lima. It Consists of Two Gourd Speaking Tubes Very Like Our Own Modern Receivers, Connected by 150 Feet of Cotton String. The Extremely Dry Climate Had Preserved It in as Good Condition as the Day It Was Used, Estimated to be Over a Thousand Years Ago.



The Receiver of the Ancient Telephone, Showing the Drum or Diaphragm, Believed to Be of Human Skin, Through Which the Line Was Fastened With a Knot Inside—Much Like the "Tin Can" Telephones Made by the Boys of Today.

By JOSEPH CISZEK PETERS

THE mysterious lost race of the Peruvian Chimu Indians used a telephone a thousand years before the invention began to jingle through our modern life.

This earliest known telephone is now on display in New York together with other interesting exhibits displayed by the Official Commercial Agency of the Peruvian Industries.

A king of the ancient Chimu, who at one time ruled over part of Peru before the Incas conquered them, used this telephone in his palace to talk to one of his wives or to summon one of his numerous servants.

That was before Leif Ericson sailed from Iceland to discover Vinland in the New World; long before Columbus officially discovered America, and when even the most profound seer could not have foretold the advent of Alexander Graham Bell and his electric telephone.

The instrument was discovered by Peruvian excavators after it had been buried for many centuries in the ruins of the main palace of Chan Chan, the capital of the Chimu.

The Chimu telephone consists of two speaking tubes or "receivers" made out of the necks of gourds. At the narrower end of each tube is a tight little drum, a counterpart of the modern diaphragm, made of human skin, probably the scalp of a slain enemy.

In the center of this drum a twisted cord of cotton is pulled through a tiny hole and fastened by means of a knot. The cord is about 150 feet long and connected the apartment of the ruler with another part of the palace.

According to Louis Bonnard, the director of the Peruvian agency, when the ruler wished to talk to someone outside his room he simply pulled the "receiver" on his end a few times. The string, tightly stretched, would dangle the "receiver" on the other end which would be the signal that his majesty wished to speak.

The same signal from the other phone notified the king that there was a "call" for him.

The telephone was used in the ninth century, yet, after a thousand years, it is as good as the day it was made. The dry climate around Chan Chan is responsible for its preservation.

The site of the ancient capital of the Chimu is on the northern Peruvian coast where it rains only five inches in 100 years. The soil, unless irrigated, is an arid desert of sand. Under layers of this sand any object remains preserved for a long time. Even the cotton string of the telephone is as good as new.

At the height of its glory as the capital of the Chimu, Chan Chan probably had a population of 250,000. The city itself was really a group of walled-in towns, separated from one another by walls some 30 or 40 feet high and from eight to ten feet wide at the base. The walls as well as the palaces, temples,

homes and other buildings, including the royal palace where the telephone was found, were built of adobe bricks. Almost no stone or wood was ever used in Chan Chan.

Where the Chimu came from or how they disappeared no one knows. It's a mystery race. Some archeologists assume that they probably came to Peru at the beginning of the Christian Era. From their well-preserved mummies, however, it can be said with certainty that they looked nothing like the other tribes of Indians living in South America.

They look rather like the Mayans of the Yucatan Peninsula in Southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras in Central America. Because of this likeness the theory is advanced that some of the Mayans must have settled along the coast of Peru and there established a civilization of their own.

Garcilasso de la Vega, a historian of the Spanish Conquest, said that the Chimu were giants, so tall that the Incas hardly reached to their knees. They had "long disheveled hair reaching to their shoulders," and eyes "as big as saucers."

De la Vega obviously received his information from the Incas whose imagination was as big as their Chimu. Cieza de Leon, another

historian, said that they were white men. That, too, is a fable. The only records of the Chimu, scanty but reliable, were compiled from the archeological finds which were, as mentioned before, well preserved.

From these relics we know that they were an agricultural tribe, sometimes known by the name of Yunga or Mochica, who had established a remarkable system of irrigation. They were expert gold, silver and copper-smiths, and there is no evidence that they ever utilized any other metals.

The Chimu, too, were exceedingly good potters, and above all they were fine weavers, using the native cotton as well as llama, alpaca, and vicuña wool for their textile products, many of them artistically ornamented and preserved and treasured to this day.

At one time in their history they clashed



Priceless Death Mask of 23-Karat Gold Found on a Chimu Mummy. A Likeness of the Deceased Placed in His Grave Was Supposed to Evoke the Good Will of the Gods.



When a Chimu Ruler Died His Close Relatives and Servants Were Ceremoniously Slaughtered and Buried With Him. Left—A Modern Peruvian Demonstrating How the Victim Was Placed on the Sacrificial Stone for the Bloody Ritual.

with the powerful Incas and fought with the Andean tribes of the Inca confederation for a century at least.

We have records that the Incas defeated them in their strong fortress of Paramonga, on the coast near Lima, and that the Chimu then retired to their walled city of Chan Chan.

There they were starved into submission by the conquering Incas. It is assumed that they were finally exterminated around the year 1400, for Pizarro and his men found no trace of them when they conquered Peru in 1535.

Like the other Indians the Chimu believed in the hereafter. The dead were buried with many of their possessions, including their wives and servants, so that they would miss no comfort in Paradise or wherever the Chimu dead went. Thanks to this custom, however, the explorers were able to retrieve many objects from their graves which tell us at least some of their interesting history.

The body of a deceased Chimu, embalmed and arrayed in gorgeous garments, was placed in a squatting position and, like the Egyptian mummies, was wrapped up in yards upon yards of cotton cloth.

A dummy head made of cloth was placed on top of the mummy and, according to rank, the face of the deceased was either painted on it or represented by a hammered gold mask.

One such priceless mask, of 23-karat gold, is also in the New York exhibit. Because of its great value in gold, not to speak of its historical worth, the Peruvian government keeps it carefully guarded in a bank vault. Yet the Chimu never put much value in gold as such.

They used gold because it was easily available and they knew how to beat and hammer it. Besides, it shone like the sun, which was their deity. Useful instruments were made out of gold, but in the main it was used in making ornaments indicating high rank, such as the ear spool worn only by the ruling class.

As ingenious as the telephone was the shaving apparatus the Chimu used and always carried with them like an ornament.

This shaving utensil was a pair of tweezers instead of a razor. The Chimu had a very rare and stringy growth of beard, similar to some Chinese. So whenever a hair would show itself on a Chimu's face he would nonchalantly pull out his tweezers and pluck it out.

This kind of a dry shave seems to have been painful, but the process wasn't any more uncomfortable than the eyebrow-plucking done by modern girls.

The plucker was always laid next to the

mummy, so growing hair on the dead Chimu would not annoy him too much in the next world.

The priests, who were expert potters at the same time, sculptured the image of the deceased in clay, accompanying their work by chanting magic songs which would draw the good will of the gods to the likeness.

The finished product was then placed alongside the mummy as well as large jars fashioned in the form of human beings and filled with chicha, a beer brewed from corn. This beer and bowls of food assured the dead one sustenance on his long journey in the other world.

Another interesting and theoretically useful piece of pottery was placed in the tomb. That was a whistling vase, probably the forerunner of the ocarina. By blowing through the nipple on one end of the vase a clear whistling tone emerged through a hole on the other end.

During his lifetime the Chimu noble used the whistling vase to summon his servants when he wished attention or some more chicha. Thoughtful as the Chimu were they didn't want their nobles to be left without chicha in the beyond. So they placed the vase next to his body in order that he could call for more whenever he needed it.

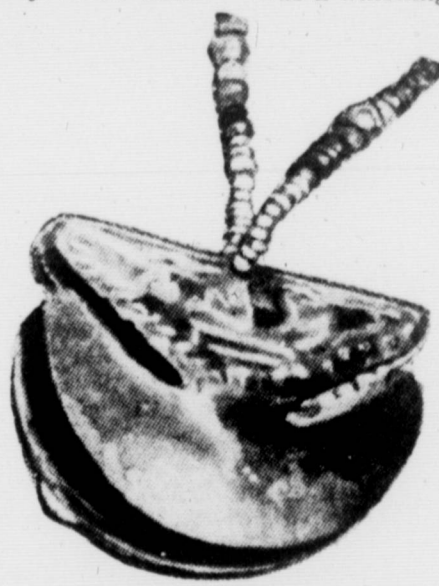
The same servants answered his call on both sides of the grave. For it was the custom of the Chimu that the closest relatives or servants kill themselves when their boss died. In some cases these servants were sacrificed

whether they wanted to die or not. No Chimu prince could be imagined without servants, dead or alive. This ceremony was performed on sacrificial stones found in Chan Chan.

Thus the dead Chimu had all the comforts of life, and more. And with his close relatives and servants squatting next to him he never felt lonesome in the other world.

On one of the mummies located in Peru a sack was found filled with cotton seeds. It is estimated that the seeds must be about 2,000 years old. The Peruvian government turned some of the seeds over to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens where experiments will be made to see whether the seeds will show signs of life and produce the same cotton the Chimu used at the time of Christ.

The exhibit now on view in New York contains other national treasures of Peru, pre-colonial and colonial, which have never been sent out of that country before. Worth thousands of dollars and of great cultural value the collection probably will be sent on a tour of the United States.



Tweezers of Solid Gold and Exquisite Workmanship With Which Some Unknown Chimu Prince "Shaved" by Plucking Out Each Hair Separately.